

# BUS TRANSFORMATION PROJECT

Strategy and Recommendations

September 2019



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## INTRODUCTION

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

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

A transformed bus system will meet these challenges and provide real results for the region:

- Reduced congestion and emissions
- Increased transit ridership
- Better and faster transportation
- Affordable transportation for more people
- More efficient use of resources
- Better travel experience for riders

**The region cannot afford to maintain the status quo.**



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To solve these problems, the region must

transform its approach to bus... priority

technology

ease of use

coordination

organization

affordability

service provision

# What can we do?

**Rapid, effective surface transportation is critical to our region's prosperity.**

**Buses have a vital role to play because they make efficient use of roadways by transporting large numbers of riders safely, conveniently, and affordably, and they provide service in areas not accessible by Metrorail.**

In the DC region, rail transit emerged as a highly-effective tool to address congestion and improve mobility, but its effectiveness has limits.

- Metrorail's high-speed, high-capacity network only reaches about a quarter of the region's land area, and any rail system expansion is many billions of dollars and decades away.

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

- Many technology-driven mobility options threaten to make congestion worse, not better, as they attract more customers and add more low-occupancy vehicles to already gridlocked streets.
- With declining ridership, bus operators are feeling the pinch: buses that are stuck in traffic are less able to attract riders, combat roadway congestion, provide time-competitive access to jobs, and help remedy the region's economic divide.

**Other regions nationally and globally have transformed their bus systems** to address similar challenges, decreasing congestion, improving reliability, and operating efficiently with frequent and fast service. **It is past time for us to do the same.**

**There is a better way to get there.**





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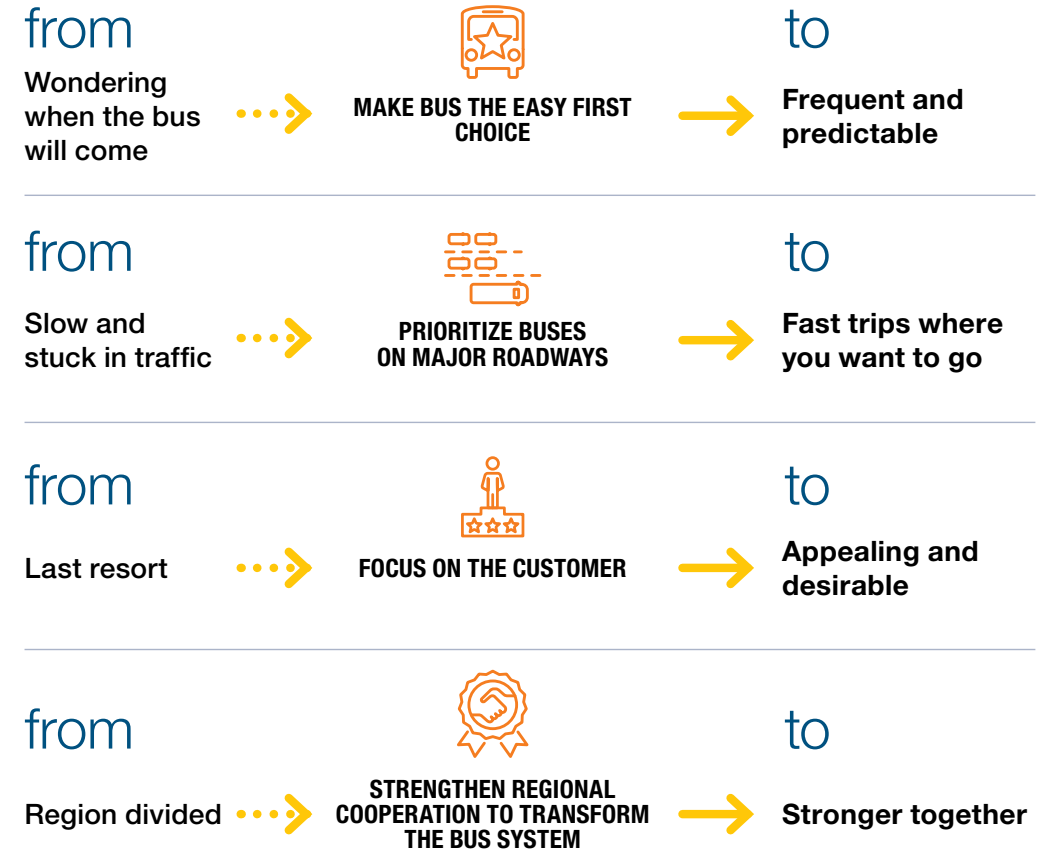
This Strategy lays out the desired direction and **specific recommendations for the region's bus system.**

The detailed implementation plan will come at the end of 2019.

# Acting on this Strategy will transform our region's bus system by...

- Focusing on what customers want - fast, frequent, reliable, affordable, bus service that is easy to use
- Maximizing the benefits of buses by providing the right type of service in the right places at the right times
- Prioritizing buses on major roads, making buses more cost effective and delivering fast, reliable, and frequent service
- Creating a bus system that feels unified to the customer while empowering multiple bus providers to address unique challenges
- Supporting immediate and sustained action by government entities to implement the changes that will make buses the mode of choice on the region's roads

## ...resulting in real changes for users of the system:



## *Project Vision:*

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





# Goals for bus in the region as voiced by stakeholders

<b>Regional connectivity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide <b>reliable on-street transit</b> options that <b>efficiently connect</b> people to places and improve mobility</li></ul>
<b>Rider experience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure a <b>convenient, easy-to-use, user-centered</b> mobility option</li></ul>
<b>Financial stewardship</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Maintain a transit mode that is <b>financially sustainable</b> in the long term</li></ul>
<b>Sustainable economic health &amp; access to opportunity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Encourage <b>vibrant, economically-thriving</b> and sustainable communities</li></ul>
<b>Equity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create a bus system that is <b>affordable and equitable</b></li></ul>

# Recommendations

The strategy to achieve the vision and goals is built around four recommendations



## 1 Frequent and Convenient Bus Service

Provide frequent and convenient bus service that connects communities and promotes housing affordability, regional equity, and economic growth.



## 2 Bus Priority on Roadways

Give buses priority on roadways to move people quickly and reliably.



## 3 Customer Experience

Create an excellent customer experience to retain and increase ridership.







## 4 Task Force to Implement the Strategy

Empower a publicly appointed Task Force to transform bus and lead the implementation of a truly integrated regional system.

# Recommendations Meet Goals

Each recommendation responds to the project vision and goals

Strategy Recommendations	Regional Bus Goals Addressed				
	Regional Connectivity	Rider Experience	Financial Stewardship	Sustainable Economic Health & Access to Opportunity	Equity
 1 Frequent and Convenient Bus Service	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
 2 Bus Priority on Roadways	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
 3 Customer Experience	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
 4 Task Force to Implement the Strategy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

# How we will measure progress

## Measure performance to demonstrate public benefit

Each recommendation has costs and benefits. The Strategy provides a framework for evaluating the “return on investment” of each initiative.

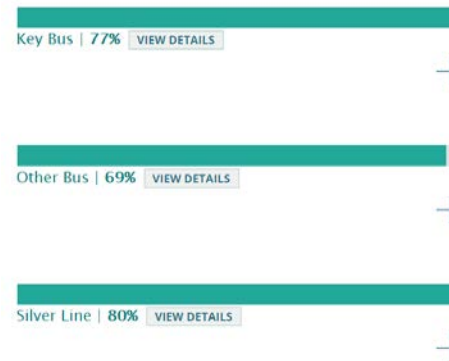
Good financial stewardship requires that the region measure progress in terms of costs and bus service effectiveness, but the positive impacts of a transformed bus system go far beyond these financials.

The goals of “Financial stewardship” and “Sustainable economic health and access to opportunity” encompass a variety of measures, for example:

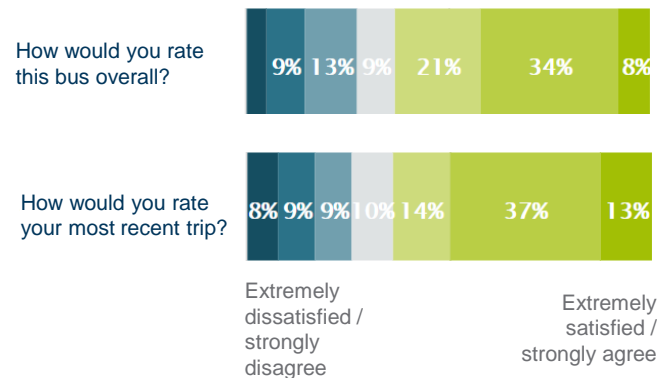
- Operating costs
- Capital costs
- Ridership
- Fare revenue
- Access to jobs and employees
- Housing affordability
- Energy use

## Example metrics

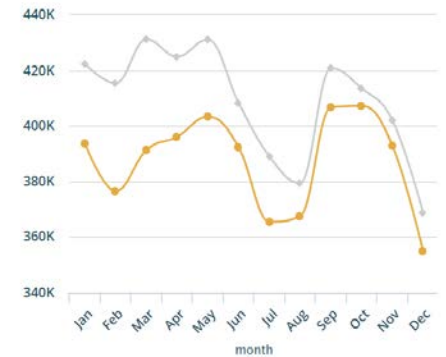
### Reliability



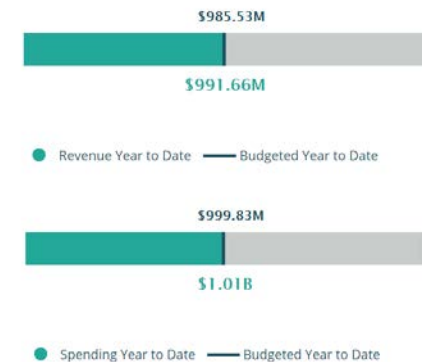
### Customer satisfaction



### Ridership



### Financials



# Principles to keep in mind

## For this Strategy, “bus” is defined as:

- Any vehicle that uses roads efficiently by carrying a large number of riders safely, conveniently and affordably.
- A range of operations, including: large buses on fixed routes; shuttle buses operating on-demand; vehicles with drivers; autonomous vehicles; publicly-owned and operated; and private commercial operations.
- While commuter buses are not explicitly covered by this project, many of the recommendations of the Strategy could be applied to better integrate commuter bus riders and the systems that carry them into the local bus system.
- Paratransit service is not impacted by the recommendations of Strategy, though many of the recommendations of the Strategy could make the local bus system more attractive to paratransit customers, providing them with greater mobility options.

## Recommendations to meet the region’s needs

- This Strategy lays out several recommendations as the framework for transforming the bus system for the region as a whole. However, there may be exceptions to these recommendations based on truly localized needs. Nothing in this Strategy should be seen as precluding those possibilities.

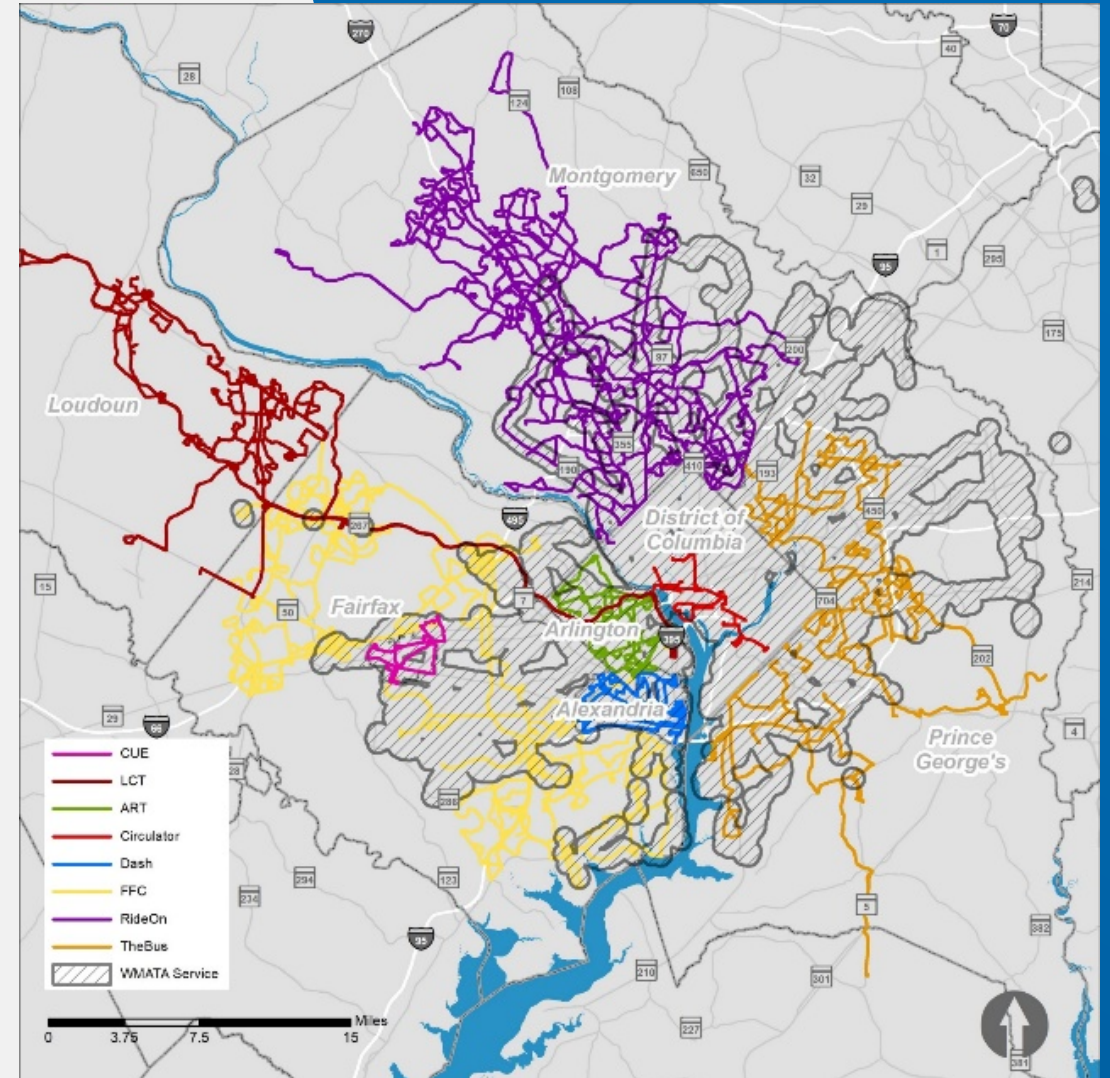


# Principles to keep in mind

The Bus Transformation Study is focused on local bus service in the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Zone.

This includes nine bus service providers:

- ART
- CUE
- DASH
- DC Circulator
- Fairfax County Connector
- Loudoun County Transit
- Ride On
- The Bus
- WMATA





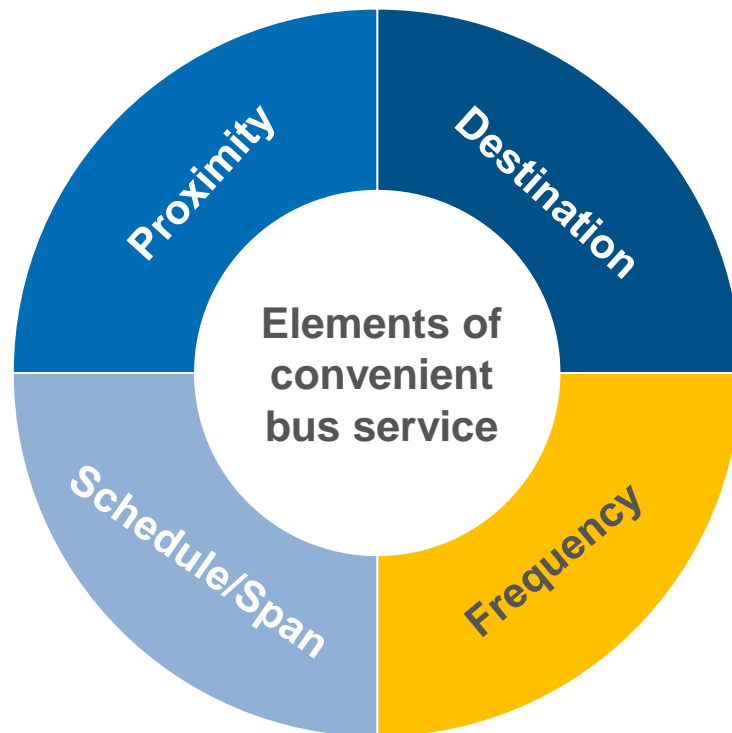
## Recommendation 1

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**Provide frequent and convenient bus service that connects communities and promotes housing affordability, regional equity, and economic growth.**

## Critical issues with the bus system today

Bus service reaches the vast majority of residents; however, destination, frequency and schedule/span limit the usefulness of the system.



**Proximity:** 81% of Washington area population (94% of transit-dependent population) has a bus stop within ¼ mile.

- But, service may not be available at all times or convenient

**Destination:** In the project survey, the third most common reason for not riding bus is "Buses don't go where I need to go."

- Service is not available or not always available to the destination
- Understanding service is difficult given multiple operators and apps
- Service decisions not based on activity or transit need

**Frequency:** Only 48% of the population in the region has access to high-frequency service – 15-minutes or less – during peak periods.

- Service is infrequent or unavailable outside of the peak periods

**Schedule/Span:** Traditional fixed-route bus service is not the best use of limited resources at all times of the day.

- Many areas have infrequent or no service outside of 7am-7pm weekdays
- Weekend service span is significantly reduced.

*Balancing coverage and frequency means tradeoffs on where, when and how much service is offered*



## Public Comments: Frequent and convenient bus service

There is broad public support for:

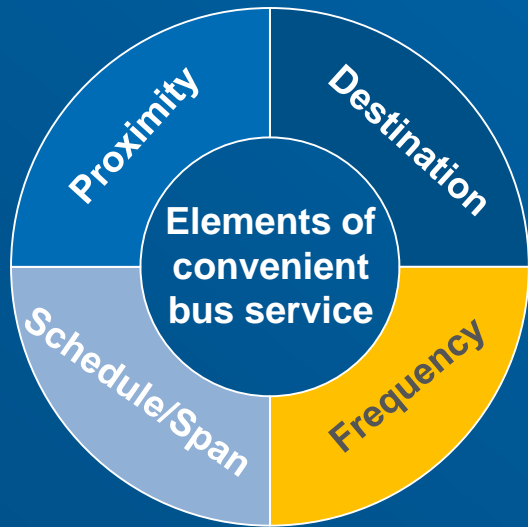
- Frequent and direct service with fewer stops
- Coordinated schedules across agencies
- A single app to plan, use, and pay for all services
- More off-peak and late night bus service
- A bus network redesign to align the routes with where people want to go and make the system easier to use
- *Testing* flexible service types if they are financially sustainable and accessible to everyone

*“Frequent needs to be reliably frequent. The bus needs to arrive when it's supposed to arrive. The failure to do so is probably the most frustrating thing about riding the bus, and the thing that keeps some people from doing it at all.”*

*“Many people have to depend on at least one bus to get someplace. Bus transferring is horrible--even with apps, schedules often are wrong, and people are forced to wait in areas where there is either no shelter or a low expectation of safety.”*

*“You should specifically look at how to realign the entire system with major corridors using the new dedicated lanes the region is planning.”*

# 1 Provide frequent and convenient bus service that connects communities and promotes housing affordability, regional equity, and economic growth.



- (A) **Establish regional standards** across bus systems to provide consistent bus service, tailored by location and time of day.
- (B) Collect and **share standardized bus operations and performance data** across agencies to improve transparency and better plan bus service.
- (C) **Collaboratively restructure the region's bus network** to create the most efficient and customer-focused bus system.\*
- (D) Cooperatively **assess Metrobus' current service definitions and funding allocation formula** using the WMATA Board's Authority
- (E) Leverage existing efforts by transit providers to **operate flexible on-demand services** to supplement the fixed route network where and when warranted

\* Through a Mass Transit Plan as required by the WMATA Compact



These recommendations will result in:

- Increased **responsiveness** to customer demand for service
- Increased **access to transit** (frequency, schedule, span)
- Convenient service that is **direct and coordinated** among providers
- Increased bus **ridership**
- More **efficient use of resources**

## Recommendation 1A:

**Establish regional standards** across bus systems to provide consistent bus service, tailored by location and time of day.

**Regional service standards applied consistently across the region will improve service in an equitable manner**

### Data Driven



Guidelines should be developed based on readily available reproducible data such as census data, land use characteristics, existing service design guidelines, and service metrics.

### Regional



Guidelines should be arrived at through regional consensus and be flexible enough that all bus service providers can apply them across our diverse region.

Existing agency guidelines should be used as a starting point.

Mechanisms should be developed to ensure guidelines are followed.

### User Focused



Guidelines should be developed to ensure the best possible service for bus riders, to meet their needs in the most convenient, frequent, fast, and reliable manner that is financially sustainable and ensures equitable access.





### Connected to Land Use



Land use drives travel patterns and thus the need for transit to serve those trips. Guidelines should therefore be closely tied to land use, with transit service (type and amount) being matched to the type, mix, and density of land use.

*“Guidelines are important for customers. The language should be simple and easy to understand.” – public comment*

## Supporting Information: Consistent service guidelines for the region will improve service design and delivery in an equitable manner

Component	What it affects	Type of guidelines and targets	Key outcomes	
	<b>Service design</b>	Which routes go where	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coverage based on mix and type of land use               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Residential type and density</li> <li>○ Destination types and density (office, retail, recreation, entertainment, education, etc.)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Connections with major activity generators and employment centers</li> </ul>	Network matching routes to today's demand for bus services
	<b>Service availability</b>	How much bus capacity per route	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vehicle Load Factor</li> <li>• Frequency</li> <li>• Span</li> <li>• Bus Stop Spacing</li> <li>• Route Directness</li> <li>• Percent of Population Covered</li> </ul>	Service levels meeting demand at the right time in the right place
	<b>Service dependability</b>	Reliability of scheduled service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percentage of Missed Trips</li> <li>• Schedule Adherence/On-time Performance</li> <li>• Vehicle Breakdowns</li> </ul>	High levels of confidence in reliability of bus schedule
	<b>Financial sustainability</b>	Cost of operating the service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farebox Recovery Ratio</li> <li>• Cost per Passenger/Trip</li> <li>• Subsidy per Passenger/Trip</li> <li>• Revenue per Passenger/Trip</li> <li>• Passengers per Hour/Mile/Trip</li> <li>• Unique Segment Ridership/Productivity per Branch</li> </ul>	Efficient and cost-effective operations that maximize impact of taxpayer subsidies while ensuring equitable access especially in disadvantaged communities

## Recommendation 1B:

Collect and **share standardized bus operations and performance data** across agencies to improve transparency and better plan bus service.



### Data Standards

Data standards outline what data should be collected by each bus system at a minimum

Specify consistent data formats so that regional data can be easily compiled and analyzed



### Data Sharing Agreement

Develop regional agreement to share specific types of data across bus systems to limit effects of jurisdictional boundaries on regional understanding of bus usage and needs



### Consolidated Data Analysis

Dedicated staff with data analytics expertise will provide the best opportunity to understand large quantities of data produced at a regional level

Data analysis specialists can focus on both regional issues and specific local needs



### Better Understanding of Market and Customers

Bus systems will be better positioned to:

- Provide the services that customers want
- Improve operating efficiencies
- Understand and address issues
- Perform more proactive planning

## Recommendation 1C: Collaboratively restructure the region's bus network to create the most efficient and customer-focused bus system.\*

### Regional Mass Transit Plan

As recommended by the 2017 LaHood report, a regional bus network refresh based on updated guidelines would include planning and implementing significant bus route changes (bus network redesign), informed by an evaluation of the network structure as a whole rather than as a collection of routes.

The goals of the refresh are to improve the quality and utility of transit service by better meeting current and future travel patterns and the needs of current and potential riders.

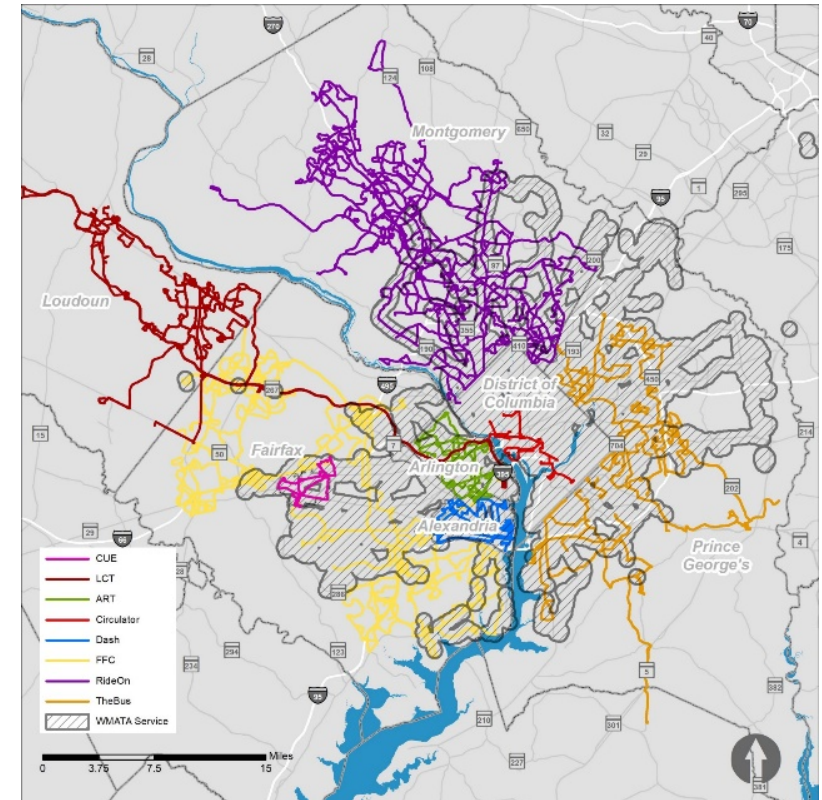
\* Through a Mass Transit Plan as defined in the WMATA Compact

### Objectives

The primary objectives include:

- Simplifying the system for ease of use
- Improving rider satisfaction
- Increasing ridership (or counteracting ridership losses)
- Improving on-time performance and reliability
- Increasing operational efficiency and effectiveness

*"...the bus system is still largely similar to what it was in the 1970s and needs to be updated to serve the needs of today's passengers"*  
– public comment



## Supporting information: Bus network redesigns have additional benefits that go beyond those realized by the customers

### Data, Efficiency, and Costs



Most agencies that have undertaken a redesign used on-board surveys, census data, and automated vehicle location (AVL) and automated passenger counter (APC) data, along with extensive input from the public.

The plethora of good data on bus performance existing today provides a way to tighten up service, focus on performance, and manage operating costs.

Many redesigns are developed with a cost-neutral operating plan, with limited resources being redeployed to other parts of the network, resulting in the more efficient use of resources.

### Opportunities



Network redesigns are seen as an opportunity to introduce new service philosophies, performance standards, and/or design standards.

They also are an opportunity to redefine and better enforce service standards and design guidelines across the entire network.

Agencies often experience improved communications as stakeholders come together to plan and implement a wide-reaching program.

Many agencies use redesigns as an opportunity to make supporting policy changes that such as changes to operations practice, fare policy, rebranding, and the organizational structure.

### Technology and Performance



A holistic evaluation of regional bus service is an opening to pilot new vehicle types and technologies. Agencies can more easily deploy new service models and coordinate improved integration with new mobility options.

Measurement and quantification of anticipated and actual improvements from bus network redesigns can be a key tool in obtaining buy-in for the plan and making decisions between different network scenarios.

Some commonly considered metrics are service area and coverage, impact on cost, equity implications, ridership, travel time, and transit accessibility.

## Recommendation 1D:

### Cooperatively assess Metrobus' current service definitions and funding allocation formula using the WMATA Board's Authority.

This will help position the regional bus system to meet regional needs and deliver regional benefits.

#### Process outline

Jurisdiction representatives, at the invitation of WMATA Board, convene on an expedited timeline to deliver recommendations.

Group proposes criteria for Metrobus service and updates the costs that jurisdictions pay for Metrobus and WMATA-provided local service.

Group makes recommendations to WMATA Board for discussion and approval.

#### Clarify Metrobus regional bus network

Define a route network that supports regional mobility as a “rubber-tire-rail” network similar to Metrorail, that the region agrees to fund jointly.

Establish more unified and consistent Metrobus service across the region that ensures a resilient transit system.

Provide access to jobs and support regional quality of life.

#### Criteria for Metrobus service

The Bus Transformation Project has initially conceived criteria as:

- **Interjurisdictional:** connect activity centers across jurisdiction boundaries
- **Critical connections:** connect rail stations and transit centers
- **High-volume corridors:** meet demand where high-density, all-day, all-week service is needed
- **Direct:** give users efficient connections



## Recommendation 1E:

Leverage existing efforts by transit providers to **operate flexible on-demand services** to supplement the fixed route network where and when warranted.

### Flexible service could lead to the following benefits

- Improved **access to transit** service
- Reduced **wait times**
- Reduced **travel times**
- More **direct** service
- More **convenient** service
- Free up **resources**

*“It’s frustrating that I have to leave early from events in DC because I’m trying to catch a bus (after taking the train) that stops servicing at 10:30.” – public comment*

### Locations for flexible, on-demand service

Identify areas where:

- The estimated demand falls below a reasonable threshold for local bus
- The roadway conditions (network, circuitry, etc.) suggest the use of flexible service

Local jurisdictions develop:

- Service guidelines based on the local needs, context, and the service type to be deployed
- Guidelines for on-demand services that are informed by the input of riders, the disabled community, and labor unions

*“Flexible, on-demand transit services should be prioritized in places where people have low incomes or otherwise do not drive.” – public comment*

# Supporting information: Delivery models range from in-house to fully outsourced

Potential delivery models

Emphasis on in-house operations

Greater reliance on third parties

Bus agency fully operates all aspects of flexible service model



Agency hires vendor to provide technology to support flexible service model, and provides the rest of the service



Agency contracts with vendor to provide technology and personnel to manage vehicle operations; agency uses its own vehicles

Agency contracts with vendor to provide all aspects of flexible service, including technology, vehicles, operations





## Recommendation 2

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**Give buses priority on roadways to move people quickly and reliably.**

## Critical issues with the bus system today

Buses move more people than cars, but are stuck in the same traffic

- This results in worse performance for riders and providers

Buses lack priority on roadways

- This leads to slower, less reliable and more costly service
- Without signal priority or bus lanes, adding more buses on busy corridors will not improve service

Transit operators do not control roadways or enforcement of regulations

- Transit operators cannot implement signal priority or bus lanes
- Local roadway agencies are responsible for adding bus priority, infrastructure, and enforcement

Priority treatments are difficult to coordinate across jurisdictional boundaries

- Bus corridors that need priority treatments cross jurisdictional boundaries
- Only coordinated corridor-wide priority treatments can yield the greatest benefits



## Public Comments: Prioritizing bus on roadways

There is broad public support for:

- Prioritizing bus on roadways
- Implementing bus lanes and signal priority
- Enforcing bus lanes with automation and fines
- Congestion pricing and curb management
- Taking a regional approach to implement priority treatments – such as congestion pricing, common standards for bus lanes and priority, and enforcement

*“Buses must be given priority on more corridors across the region. It is essential to moving more people, more quickly, and more equitably.”*

*“Please emphasize the importance of enforcement - particularly automated. There aren't enough police available to patrol and deter violations - it needs to be automated.”*

*“All bus routes should have dedicated bus lanes and priority at intersections. They move far more people more efficiently and with less pollution than cars and therefore should have priority.”*

## 2 Give buses priority on roadways to move people quickly and reliably.

- A Obtain commitments from state and local agencies (including roadway owners) to **adopt consistent guidelines**, bolster jurisdictional capital spending, and expedite coordinated implementation of bus priority.
- B Implement enforcement policies that **establish bus priority** and result in reliable and fast service.
- C Establish a capital program at WMATA that **supports accelerated implementation of bus priority projects** including BRT.
- D Support regional congestion mitigation efforts that bolster bus priority and **move more people more efficiently**.



These recommendations will result in:

- Reduced **journey time** for bus riders
- Increased **on-time performance**
- Increased **ridership**
- Increased frequency and decreased **bus operating costs**
- Improved **corridor traffic conditions** for all vehicles
- Improved **regional productivity and competitiveness**

## Recommendation 2A

Obtain commitments from state and local agencies (including roadway owners) to **adopt consistent guidelines**, bolster jurisdictional capital spending, and expedite coordinated implementation of bus priority.



Obtain formal **agreement** across region to commit to area-appropriate bus priority treatments

Bus operators and state/local roadway owners agree to pursue bus priority treatments across the region

Agreement includes intention to establish regional bus priority guidelines, implement projects and advance enforcement measures.



Establish regional guidelines for the type of bus priority **treatments** to implement



**Transit Signal Priority:** Reduces signal delay at intersections



**Queue Jumps:** Lane segment that allows a bus to pass vehicles stopped at intersections



**Off-Board Fare Payment:** Decreases dwell time at stops



**Dedicated Bus Lanes/ Guideways:** Allows faster operation for buses



**All-Door Boarding:** Decreases dwell time at bus stops



**Parking Limitations:** Restricting times and locations to improve traffic flow



Establish regional guidelines for selecting **corridors** to receive priority treatment



**Service Frequency:** Prioritization on high-frequency corridors



**Ridership:** Prioritization on high-volume corridors



**Stop Spacing:** Corridors with priority treatments should have longer distance between stops



**Land Use Characteristics:** Prioritization for corridors with high density, transit friendly land-use

All treatments consider pedestrian and bicycle accommodation.

## Recommendation 2B:

Implement enforcement policies that **establish bus priority** and result in reliable and fast service.



Bus priority treatment guidelines should incorporate enforcement strategies and agencies from the outset

**Stakeholder Coordination** is critical – Individuals responsible for planning, design, construction, enforcement, and maintenance need to be at the table from the beginning to establish effective and coordinated procedures.

- **Achieve agreement for Enforcement Mechanisms** – Police enforcement and automated camera enforcement are the two most common tools used to capture bus lane violations.
- Enact **Legislation – Empower localities with** authorization to issue fines with use of manual ticketing or automated camera enforcement.
- Promote **Education Campaigns** – focused information to all road users for understanding and correct use of priority treatments.





## Recommendation 2C:

# Establish a capital program at WMATA that **supports accelerated implementation of bus priority projects**, including BRT.

### Shared Benefits

All jurisdictions and riders share the benefits of priority treatments that improve regional and local access, mobility, and economic competitiveness

#### **Benefits for users and jurisdictions**

- **Faster speeds** – fewer buses required to provide better service means decreased regional costs for additional buses and facilities
- **Greater reliability** – improves customer satisfaction and travel time competitiveness
- **Traffic circulation** – improved flow for buses and cars due to systems and infrastructure treatments
- **Revenue stream** – mitigates enforcement and maintenance costs
- **Coordination of projects** – savings for planning and implementation of related or complementary regional bus, local bus, local roadway or land use projects

### Capital Cost-Sharing Program

WMATA creates a capital cost sharing program to help offset upfront costs for jurisdictions to implement priority treatments

- A competitive grant program funds on-street bus priority measures that will have the greatest regional impact and benefits
- Jurisdictions identify and pursue funding for bus priority enhancements based on guidelines

## Recommendation 2D:

Support regional congestion mitigation efforts that bolster bus priority and **move more people more efficiently.**

### Methods to reduce low-occupancy vehicle usage:

**Parking restrictions:** For motorists, either charge or increase parking fees, or reduce the number of parking spaces available

**"No stopping" zone fines:** Charges to motorists for stopping in specified "no stopping" zones

### Pricing mechanisms such as:

- *Dynamic tolling:* Variable toll amounts charged based on roadway congestion
- *Cordon zone pricing:* Fees charged to vehicles traveling within specific area
- *Vehicle miles traveled fee:* Charge for motorists based on road usage measured in mileage; fee can be flat or variable
- *Curb access fees:* Charge to motorists/deliveries for use of curbside space

### How bus agencies can support these efforts:

**Policy:** Bus agencies can work with entities leading congestion reduction efforts to encourage policies that disincentivize usage of low-occupancy vehicles

**Planning:** Bus agencies can support the planning process to ensure that these initiatives are aligned with and enabled by upcoming bus system improvements

**Adjust service:** Bus agencies can increase service hours and frequency to accommodate increase in riders resulting from reduced personal vehicle usage



## Recommendation ③

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**Create an excellent customer experience to retain and increase ridership.**

## Travelers have changing expectations and more options...



Easy to use



Short wait times



Fast & direct  
trips



Comfortable  
waiting  
conditions



Reliable,  
real-time data

**...and current bus service is not keeping pace.**

## Critical issues with the bus system today

**Better bus service means doing the basics – providing fast, frequent, reliable and affordable service. This could prove truly transformational.**

- It can be less pleasant to ride the bus compared with other mobility options
- Real-time information is unreliable
- Multiple bus providers make the regional system hard to understand and use
- Transit is too expensive for many bus riders
- People don't always feel safe waiting for or riding the bus
- The bus system doesn't seem to be keeping up with technology innovations



## Public Comments: Excellent customer experience

There is broad public support for:

- Free transfers from bus to Metrorail
- Bus stop improvements
- Real-time arrival information
- Simpler pass products
- Reduced-fare products
- Mobile app
- Simplified maps & route names

*“Making one bus pass that can be used for all bus in the metropolitan area makes people to ride bus more.”*

*“Simplifying passes and make it easier to understand. Currently very confusing to what can be used when and where.”*

*“Free transfers and unified payment would do wonders.”*

*“An app with bus location would be amazing.”*

*“Make it obvious where users can transfer to other buses, not just to metro stations.”*

# 3 Create an excellent customer experience to retain and increase ridership.

## A Equip riders with high-quality, accurate, and easily accessible information to plan a trip.

A1: Ensure that accurate, real-time service information for all providers is available in one place

A2: Make bus service easy to understand with legible maps and customer-friendly route names across providers

A3: Expand marketing efforts to enhance visibility of bus options and benefits

## B Make paying bus fares easier.

B1: Provide free transfers between bus and rail

B2: Provide reduced fare options for low-income riders

B3: Create a mobile solution to plan and pay for trips in one place

B4: Develop new regional passes that work across all providers, and make bus fares clear and understandable

B5: Incentivize more employers to offer transit benefits



These recommendations will result in:

- Increased **customer satisfaction**
- **More affordable transportation** for residents that need it most
- **Increased transit ridership**
- **Less congestion** on our region's roads
- Reduced **safety incident rates** at bus stops and on buses
- Reduced **environmental impact** of transportation

# 3 Create an excellent customer experience to retain and increase ridership.

## C Make it safer and more pleasant to ride the bus.

C1: Make bus stops and shelters safe, comfortable, accessible, and technology-enabled

C2: Advance technology and programs that improve the safety of everyone on board by partnering with riders, bus operators, and unions

C3: Empower front-line staff to provide exceptional customer service

C4: Ensure that all buses meet the highest standards of comfort and cleanliness

## D Pursue innovation and bus improvement.

D1: Advance new vehicle technologies to improve bus' environmental footprint and efficiency

D2: Establish a Regional Mobility Innovation Lab to systematically share knowledge and accelerate improvements such as service provision, customer experience, and bus operator and passenger safety.



These recommendations will result in:

- Increased **customer satisfaction**
- **More affordable transportation** for residents that need it most
- **Increased transit ridership**
- **Less congestion** on our region's roads
- Reduced **safety incident rates** at bus stops and on buses
- Reduced **environmental impact** of transportation



## Recommendation 3A: Equip riders with high-quality, accurate, and **easily accessible information** to plan a trip.



### Data: Accurate and Accessible

**A1:** Ensure that **accurate, real-time service information** for all providers is available in one place

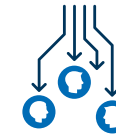
- Set data standards that outline what data should be collected by each bus system at a minimum
- Develop regional agreement to share real-time data to improve reliability of apps and real time information, such as a single GTFS-based API for region



### Easy to Understand

**A2:** Make bus service **easy to understand** with legible maps and customer-friendly route names across providers

- Naming conventions with a customer focus instead of a transit planner perspective have been deployed in many transit systems
- Simplification of maps gives people the information they need, when they need it



### Improve Awareness and Appeal

**A3:** Expand **marketing** efforts to enhance visibility of bus options and benefits

- Advise benefits of the bus, including affordability and fare options such as the weekly bus pass
- Distribute content to customers in a variety of ways
- Use Data-driven marketing strategies and tailor messaging for different market segments
- Raise awareness of comfortable, modern, and safe bus fleets and bus stops to promote a great experience

## Recommendation 3B: Make **paying bus fares easier**.



Almost half of Metrobus customers are Low-Income

### Free Transfers

**B1:** Provide **free transfers** between bus and rail

- One of the highest priorities of public survey respondents
- This region has the highest bus-rail transfer fee of all peer agencies nationally
- Introduction of a similar program in New York resulted in 2% increase in ridership and improved mobility for low-income riders

### Reduced Fares

**B2:** Provide **reduced fare options** for low-income riders

- High priority among low-income public survey respondents
- Expands mobility and flexibility for the people who need it the most
- Similar programs have been successfully implemented in cities around the country

### Mobile solution

**B3:** Create a **mobile solution to plan** and pay for trips in one place including:

- Easy trip planning
- Multi-modal options
- Seamless payment
- Real-time information
- Customized user experience

*Lowering the cost of using transit has the potential to increase ridership and reduce single-occupancy vehicle trips*

# Recommendation: Make it easier to pay bus fares



## Bus Passes & Clear Fares

**B4:** Develop new regional [passes that work across all providers](#), and make bus fares clear and understandable

- Bus passes are currently available for purchase with specific providers
- Metro's Unlimited passes allow travel on Metrorail and Metrobus but do not cover bus fares on other systems in the region
- A 2002 study in New York found that 46% of regular MTA MetroCard users take trips because of the free transfers that they would not have otherwise taken
- Varied fare policy across bus providers can be difficult for riders to understand and remember

*“Riding the bus should be simple and easy. Simple fare structure. Simple apps. Simple policies.”  
– public comment*



## Transit Benefits

**B5:** Incentivize more employers to offer [transit benefits](#)

- Employer-based transit incentive programs are unevenly supported in the region, and employers with significant numbers of bus riders do not offer transit benefits
- DC has a mandatory employer transit benefit program
- IRS provides a tax credit for employer transit benefits
- MD gives tax credit to employers who provide transit benefits

## Recommendation 3C: Make it safer and more pleasant to ride the bus



### Safe Bus Stops

**C1:** Make bus stops and shelters safe, comfortable, accessible, and technology-enabled

- Align existing guidelines for bus stop amenities / ADA access and establish process for improvement

#### WMATA Survey: Top 10 most important individual amenities

1. Real-time information
2. Schedule and route information
3. Lighting
4. Crosswalks
5. Connected sidewalks
6. Trash cans
7. Paved area
8. Bench
9. Security camera
10. Removal of items blocking access



### Safe Buses

**C2:** Advance technology and programs that improve the safety of everyone on board by partnering with riders, bus operators, and unions

*Assaults against drivers increased 31% in 2017.  
– Washington Post*



### Empowered Staff

**C3:** Empower front-line staff to provide great customer service

- Providers reorient towards a customer oriented culture
- Providers empower front line staff through internal programs that promote continuous customer service improvements

*“Some riders are afraid to report issues because afraid of physical confrontations or because the issue will cause delays in arrival times.”  
– public comment*



### Clean Buses

**C4:** Ensure that all buses meet the highest standards of comfort and cleanliness

*“The level of cleanliness of the buses is also worrying, some of the seats are disgusting.”  
– public comment*

## Recommendation 3D: Pursue **innovation** and bus improvement

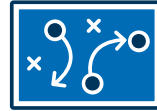


### New Technology

**D1:** Advance **new vehicle technologies** to improve bus' environmental footprint and efficiency

- Prepare for electric vehicles (EV)
- Continue autonomous vehicle (AV) conversations

Potential to reduce maintenance and operations costs



### Continuous Improvement

**D2:** Establish a **Regional Mobility Innovation Lab** to systematically share knowledge and accelerate improvements such as service provision, customer experience, and bus operator and passenger safety.

- Forum for sharing information and leveraging the work of existing innovation labs and think-tanks
- Pilot projects and funding – to test new technologies and innovation

### Innovation Lab can wear many different hats



#### Incubator

- Generates new ideas with help of iterative design process and fast testing
- Forms new interdisciplinary teams for each new topic consisting of designers, researchers, developers



#### Accelerator

- Scales existing ideas in different stages of development from inside the organization
- Gives access to resources, especially relevant experts



#### Knowledge Broker

- Pools knowledge and translates it for the relevant context
- Creates visibility for new ideas and helps to establish them across the region



#### Impact evaluator

- Evaluates and measures the impact of its projects
- Sets up system for performance measurement through Key Performance Indicators



#### Networker

- Establishes a network between all regional stakeholders
- Offers public events and workshops in which participants can exchange best practices



#### Think tank

- Publishes major findings from projects and makes them available to the public
- Provides information to the public on the work inside the lab



## Recommendation 4

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**Empower a publicly appointed Task Force to transform bus and lead the implementation of a truly integrated regional system.**

## Critical issues with the bus system today

- Previous studies that have tried to implement similar recommendations have had varying success, largely a result of the disjointed governance structure and multiple transit providers in the region
- Mobility needs to transcend jurisdictional boundaries
- Existing regional entities lack the mandate, will, and authority to prioritize bus across the region
- Without strong oversight by officials who prioritize bus, the public will not see the full potential of the regional investment in bus and continue to be underserved
- Buses carry almost as many trips as Metrorail, yet the bus system is rarely discussed by local and regional decision makers. As a result, buses are chronically overlooked, underfunded, and lack sufficient support to provide a high level of service for riders
- Without one entity that can quickly command the attention, funding, resources, and coordination necessary to improve bus across the region, service is at risk for stagnating and remaining at the status quo

## Public Comments: Leadership for Transformation

There is broad public support for:

- A more unified system that doesn't require the customer to understand the systems of nine different providers
- Service that is accountable to current and future bus riders
- An effort driven by local knowledge and cooperation
- Market-based solutions; not driven by regulations and penalties
- Holding leaders accountable for improving bus with transparent standards and easy-to-digest scorecards

*“Performance management and accountability are key to long-term, sustainable success.”*

*“Holding transportation and transit agencies accountable for prioritizing bus... Create interjurisdictional entity with teeth”*

*“Senior elected officials must be on board and drive this”*

*“Find a way to make sure the WMATA Board spends a reasonable amount of time on bus!”*



# 4 Empower a publicly appointed Task Force to transform bus and lead the implementation of a truly integrated regional system.

- A** Convene a Task Force to **oversee implementation** of the Strategy and **provide long-term leadership** for the regional bus system with membership as follows:
- The Governors of Virginia and Maryland and the Mayor of the District of Columbia each nominate one person (three members total)
  - The six principal members from the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia on the WMATA Board collectively nominate one person (one member total)
  - Bus Transformation Executive Steering Committee nominates three people (three members total)
  - The Task Force itself may nominate up to two additional people (up to two members total)
- B** Facilitate an independently published **annual progress report** on Bus Transformation Strategy implementation and a **bus performance scorecard** to track the level of service delivered to customers.
- C** **Develop a platform for rider feedback**, administered by the Task Force, and an ongoing mechanism for incorporating feedback into regular revisions of the Strategy recommendations.



These recommendations will result in:

- A **unified bus system** that is **customer-responsive**
- **Customer representation** for strong customer accountability
- **Integrated decision making** and efficient use of public resources
- **Better coordination** of operations and facilities, services and guidelines

## Recommendation 4A:

Convene a **Task Force to oversee implementation** of the Strategy and provide long-term leadership for the regional bus system



**Vision:** Task Force has authority to promote, oversee, direct, and manage bus:

- Acts as the unified voice of bus in the region and a platform for excellence
- Drives changes across jurisdictions and the region as a whole
- Reflects and amplifies the voice of current and future riders
- Serves the region with accountable staff who are committed to the effort

*A regionally-integrated bus system will take leadership, cooperation, and changes to existing local, regional, and state policies. The cities, counties, public transit agencies, regional authorities, business leaders, advocacy groups and elected representatives of this region must work together to prioritize the public's interest.*

## Recommendation 4A:

# Convene a **Task Force to oversee implementation** of the Strategy and provide long-term leadership for the regional bus system

**Impact:** Task Force “owns” the Strategy to ensure responsible agencies and individuals implement the recommendations, such as:



- Establish regional standards across bus systems to provide consistent bus service
- Develop a regional mass transit plan that aligns resources, routes, and service



- Adopt regional bus priority guidelines that makes sure bus gets people where they need to go, quickly and efficiently
- Support and coordinate with regional congestion mitigation efforts



- Enhance and improve the customer experience through providing accurate and real-time information, making it easier to pay, making it safer and more pleasant, and working to continuously improve and innovate

## Recommendation 4A:

# Convene a **Task Force to oversee implementation** of the Strategy and provide long-term leadership for the regional bus system

**Structure and capacity** of the Task Force within the existing regulatory environment:

### **Task Force decision making authority:**

- Makes decisions on behalf of the organizations represented, with purview related to roads, service, funding, and operations
- Acts independently to engage private and non-profit sectors, and serve as an advocate on behalf of customers

### **Representation and accountability:**

- The Governors of Virginia and Maryland and the Mayor of the District of Columbia each nominate one person (three members total)
- The six principal members from the District of Columbia, Virginia, and Maryland on the WMATA Board collectively nominate one person (one member total)
- Bus Transformation Executive Steering Committee nominates three people, with perspectives including business leadership, labor organizations, and community advocacy groups (three members total)
- The Task Force itself may nominate up to two additional people to ensure a balance of experience and perspectives (up to two members total)

**Work plan** to establish the framework for systematic implementation:

### **Initial steps for setting up Task Force:**

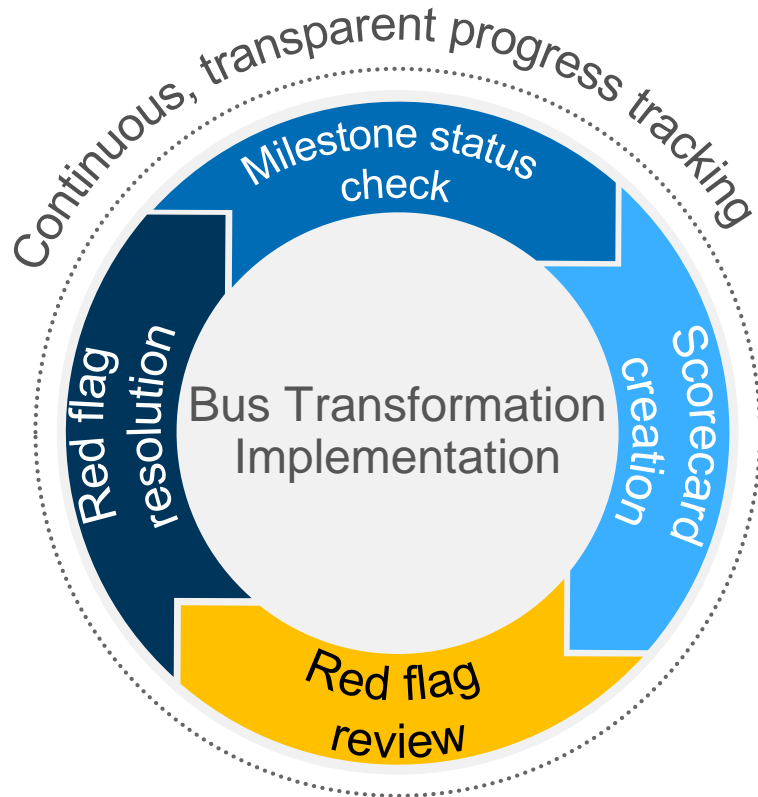
- Setting Task Force vision, mission, and goals
- Potential regional and state agreements
- Potential funding and staffing requirements
- Potential sources for dedicated bus funding

### **Functional location:**

Task Force staff and resources are situated within the region's existing agencies, departments and organizations – likely at MWCOG

## Recommendation 4B:

Facilitate an independently published **annual progress report** on Bus Transformation Strategy implementation and a bus **performance scorecard** to track the level of service delivered to customers.



### Milestone status check

Independent organization gathers information on latest status of upcoming Project milestones and performance metrics to track

### Scorecard creation

Organization creates and publishes scorecard highlighting Project milestones that are on-track ("green"), progressing but facing obstacle(s) ("yellow"), and behind schedule ("red")

### Red flag review

Regional coalition reviews scorecard to identify areas for intervention and next steps to resolve any roadblocks

### Red flag resolution

Key leads for each "red" or "yellow" milestone implement recovery plans, engaging relevant stakeholders as needed

## Recommendation 4B:

### Example — Annual report benefits and project scorecard

Benefits associated with publishing annual progress reports include:

#### Ensures accountability

- Enables public to understand how much progress is being made on each recommendation
- Tracks true regional progress on strategy
- Tracks Task Force effectiveness at managing transformation of bus system

#### Provides insight into lagging milestones

- Facilitates diagnosis of major roadblocks and risks
- Supports identification of mitigation tactics to keep Strategy execution on-track

#### Enables prioritization of key actions

- Supports efforts to continuously turn high-level recommendations into concrete, prioritized actions

#### Enhances visibility into regional bus performance

- Provides insight into how regional bus is performing on key success metrics (today, bus performance metrics are typically shared at local level only)

Sample: Key elements of Project scorecard to be shared with the public

Progress tracker					
Strategy point	Recommendation	Completion	Key leads	Status	Notes
<b>Align bus service to demand</b>	Develop regional service guidelines	[Date]	[Name]	Complete ✓	
	Obtain commitment from elected officials to prioritize bus on roadways			On-track	
<b>Prioritize bus on roadways</b>	Align on bus priority guidelines			Progressing but facing obstacles	
	Develop route-naming proposal for the region			Behind schedule	
<b>Create a system people want to ride</b>					

Regional bus performance	
Ridership change:	Customer satisfaction:
On-time performance:	Financials:

Looking Ahead: Risks & Mitigation

## Recommendation 4B: Example — Annual report benefits and performance metrics

Benefits associated with publishing annual scorecards include:

### Ensures reliability

- Tracks on-time performance by bus line
- Can be refreshed daily and analyzed for trends

### Provides insight into ridership trends

- Month-to-month bus ridership
- Can be refreshed monthly and analyzed for trends

### Makes finances transparent

- Tracks budget vs. actual financials
- Can be refreshed monthly and analyzed for trends

### Insight on customer satisfaction

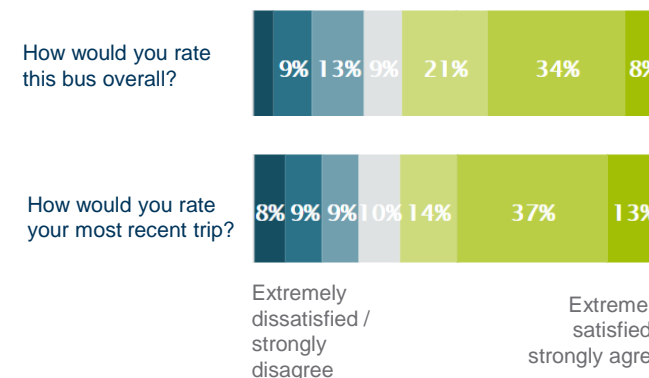
- Provides customer ratings on performance metrics
- Can be refreshed monthly and analyzed for trends

### Sample scorecard metrics

#### Reliability



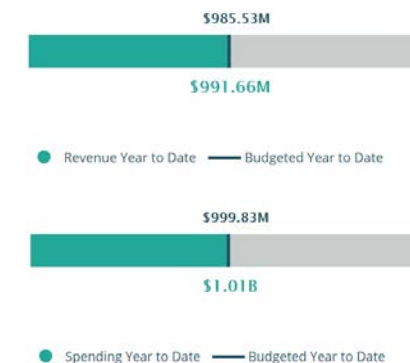
#### Customer satisfaction



#### Ridership



#### Financials



## Recommendation 4C:

Develop a platform for **rider feedback**, administered by the Task Force, and an ongoing mechanism for incorporating feedback into regular revisions of the Strategy recommendations.



### Advocacy and Public Influence

- Provide a stronger voice for the public and push forward the agenda for bus
- Task Force is accountable to public feedback, which is integrated into the recommendations as they move forward
- Information is shared among the network of regional stakeholder organizations whose decisions affect bus
- The new platform for feedback complements but does not preclude project-level public engagement

*"Riders want a stronger voice in improving and shaping their bus system"*

*– public comment*

*"The best way to measure accountability is to ask customers as well as the drivers who also have the best information and knowledge as to whether a service is working or not"*

*– public comment*





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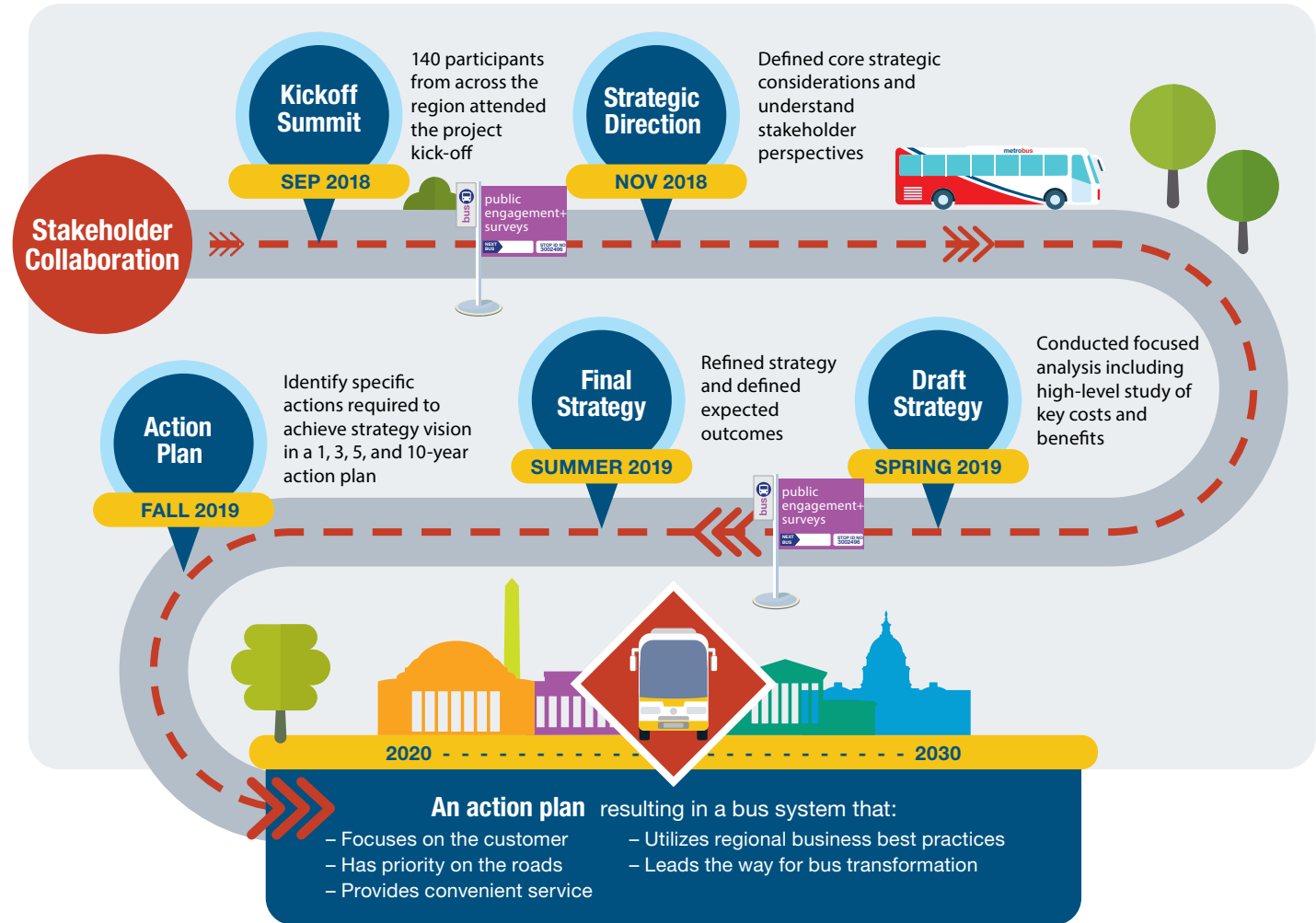
## Next Steps






# Implementing the Recommendations

# Strategy to Action

The Bus Transformation Project is designed to maximize the value of the region's bus system and support a strong and growing future.






The Action Plan will factor in the existing work of operators and jurisdictions, quick wins for gaining momentum, and the best sequence for implementing the recommendations.







-  Bus Operating Agencies
-  Roadway Owner Agencies
-  WMATA
-  Task Force
-  Independent Organizations

# Summary of Recommendations






Anticipating action steps for implementation, the recommendations relate to a range of “owner” organizations

<b>Recommendation #1</b> Provide frequent and convenient bus service that connects communities and promotes housing affordability, regional equity, and economic growth.	<b>Principal Owner</b>
1A. Establish regional standards across bus systems to provide consistent bus service, tailored by location and time of day.	
1B. Collect and share standardized bus operations and performance data across agencies to improve transparency and better plan bus service.	
1C. Collaboratively restructure the region’s bus network to create the most efficient and customer-focused bus system.	
1D. Cooperatively assess Metrobus’ current service definitions and funding allocation formula using the WMATA Board’s Authority.	
1E. Leverage existing efforts by transit providers to operate flexible on-demand services to supplement the fixed route network where and when warranted.	

<b>Recommendation #2</b> Give buses priority on roadways to move people quickly and reliably.	<b>Principal Owner</b>
2A. Obtain commitments from state and local agencies (including roadway owners) to adopt consistent guidelines, bolster jurisdictional capital spending, and expedite coordinated implementation of bus priority.	
2B. Implement enforcement policies that establish bus priority and result in reliable and fast service.	
2C. Establish a capital program at WMATA that supports accelerated implementation of bus priority projects, including BRT.	
2D. Support regional congestion mitigation efforts that bolster bus priority and move more people more efficiently.	

# Summary of Recommendations

Anticipating action steps for implementation, the recommendations relate to a range of “owner” organizations

-  Bus Operating Agencies
-  Roadway Owner Agencies
-  WMATA
-  Task Force
-  Independent Organizations

## Recommendation #3

Create an excellent customer experience to retain and increase ridership.

A. Equip riders with high-quality, accurate, and easily accessible information to plan a trip.

A1: Ensure that accurate, real-time service information for all providers is available in one place

A2: Make bus service easy to understand with legible maps and customer-friendly route names across providers

A3: Expand marketing efforts to enhance visibility of bus options and benefits

B. Make paying bus fares easier.

B1: Provide free transfers between bus and rail

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B3: Create a mobile solution to plan and pay for trips in one place

B4: Develop new regional passes that work across all providers, and make bus fares clear and understandable

B5: Incentivize more employers to offer transit benefits

Principal Owner



Principal Owner

C. Make it safer and more pleasant to ride the bus.

C1: Make bus stops and shelters safe, comfortable, accessible, and technology-enabled

C2: Advance technology and programs that improve the safety of everyone on board by partnering with riders, bus operators, and unions

C3: Empower front-line staff to provide exceptional customer service

C4: Ensure that all buses meet the highest standards of comfort and cleanliness

D. Pursue innovation and bus improvement.






D1: Advance new vehicle technologies to improve bus' environmental footprint and efficiency, such as electric buses and automation

D2: Establish a Regional Mobility Innovation Lab to systematically share knowledge and accelerate improvements such as service provision, customer experience, and bus operator and passenger safety



# Summary of Recommendations

Anticipating action steps for implementation, the recommendations relate to a range of “owner” organizations

-  Bus Operating Agencies
-  Roadway Owner Agencies
-  WMATA
-  Task Force
-  Independent Organizations

## Recommendation #4

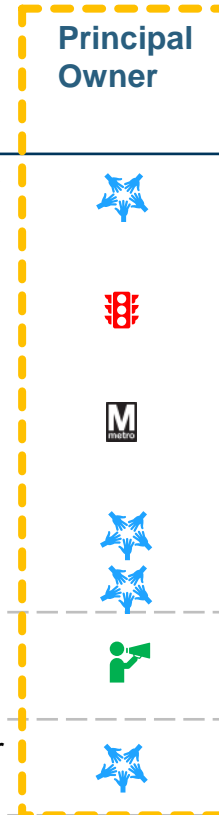
Empower a publicly appointed Task Force to transform bus and lead the implementation of a truly integrated regional system.

4A. Convene a Task Force to oversee implementation of the Strategy and provide long-term leadership for the regional bus system with membership as follows:

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4B. Facilitate an independently published annual progress report on Bus Transformation Strategy implementation and a bus performance scorecard to track the level of service delivered to customers

4C. Develop a platform for rider feedback, administered by the Task Force, and an ongoing mechanism for incorporating feedback into regular revisions of the Strategy recommendations



# Project Participants

## Executive Steering Committee

Rob Puentes, Chair  
Rosie Allen-Herring  
David Alpert  
Chuck Bean  
Bob Buchanan  
Jim Dyke  
Nat Gandhi  
Kim Horn  
Jack McDougle  
Sandy Modell  
Neil Pedersen  
Jack Potter  
David Richardson  
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Stewart Schwartz  
Anne Stubbs  
Beverley Swaim-Staley  
Ed Wytkind

## WMATA Leadership Team

Paul Wiedefeld, General Manager and Chief Executive Officer  
Joseph Leader, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer  
Robert Potts, Senior Vice President, Bus Services  
Andrea Burnside, Vice President, Operating Budget, Performance, and Planning  
Jim Hughes, Managing Director, Intermodal Strategic Planning  
Barbara Richardson, Executive Vice President and Chief of External Affairs  
Lynn Bowersox, Senior Vice President, Customer Service, Communications, and Marketing  
Regina Sullivan, Vice President, Government Relations  
Dennis Anosike, Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer  
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Zachary Chissell, Maryland Transit Administration  
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Candace Cunningham, Restaurant Opportunities Center  
Ronnie Dampier, Office of the City Administrator  
Bob Duffy, Arlington Department of Community Planning, Housing, and Development  
Dan Emerine, District Department of Transportation  
Sophia Fisher, Fairfax Department of Planning and Zoning  
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Rudy Gardner, Local 922  
Gigi Godwin, Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce  
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Dan Hibbert, Montgomery County Department of Transportation - RideOn  
Jennifer DeBruhl, Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transit (DRPT)  
Jennifer Hosey, Action Committee for Transit  
Raymond Jackson, Local 689  
Aly Kaba, DC Office on African Affairs  
Steve Kaffen, WMATA Accessibility Advisory Committee (DC)  
Monika Kerdeman, Transportation Planning Board Citizens Advisory Committee (MD)  
Elizabeth Kiker, House of Ruth  
Yon Lambert, City of Alexandria  
Dennis Leach, Arlington County

Justin Lini, Transportation Planning Board Citizens Advisory Committee (DC)  
Jana Lynott, AARP  
Nechama Masliansky, So Others Might Eat  
Kate Mattice, Northern Virginia Transportation Commission  
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Maura Brophy, Federal City Council  
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Caitlin Rogger, Greater Greater Washington  
Lisa Rother, Urban Land Institute (ULI Washington)  
Wendy Sanford, City of Fairfax  
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Yesim Taylor, DC Policy Center  
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Deb Wake, League of Women Voters, National Capital  
D'Andrea Walker, Prince George's County  
Wil White, Riders Advisory Council  
Yemisrach Wolde, DC Language Access Coalition