BUS TRANSFORMATION PROJECT

City of Alexandria Transportation Committee

January 15, 2020

WASHINGTON AREA BUS TRANSFORMATION PROJECT

Overview

1. The Need to Transform the Bus

2. Bus Transformation Strategy

3. Action Plan

4. Next Steps

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

Bus's Value Proposition

Bus is a major part of the region's transportation system, carrying 600,000 daily trips

- Much of our region's population depends on bus as their only way to travel
- Rapid, effective bus service is fundamental to our region's prosperity
- Most cost-effective and efficient way to move the most people quickly, safety, and rapidly

Core challenges

- Meeting customer needs
- Keeping up with changing technology
- Coordinating across the region
- Maintaining a sustainable cost structure
- Deciding how service is paid for

Collaborative transformation: a broad and deep process

Quality bus service is a shared responsibility:

- Bus service providers
- Departments of transportation who own, operate, and enforce streets and curbs
- Funding partners

Working together is critical to ensuring the bus system meets customer needs

More than a year of public and stakeholder input, including:

- 140 participants in September 2018 Kickoff Summit
- 8,800+ public survey responses
- 13 Metrobus operator listening sessions
- 4 Focus Groups
- 23 Executive Steering Committee meetings*
- 16 Technical Team meetings*
- 8 Strategy Advisory Panel meetings*
- 45 External project briefings
- 3 Public Open House events
- 33 Pop-up events
- 14 WMATA Leadership Team meetings*
- 285 Social media posting
- 312,000 people reached via social media

*All project committee members can be found on the lasts page of the Strategy Summary and the Action Plan Summary, available on the project website.

Strategy 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

What is Different in the Final Strategy

Changes Based on Feedback from the City of Alexandria:

- **Removed recommendation to ‘transfer service’,** but included recommendation for the WMATA Board to revisit the definition of “regional” and “non-regional” service
- **Delayed the start of the Task Force to enable further discussion in the region.** The Action Plan identifies existing entities to advance recommendations while discussions seek to improve several aspects of bus governance:
  - Accountability
  - Visibility
  - High-Level Collaboration
  - Regional Solutions to Regional Problems
- **Removed recommendation to consolidate back-office functions**

What is Different in the Final Strategy

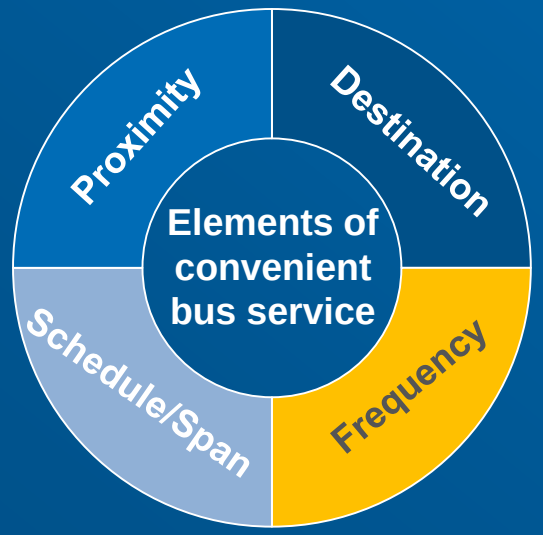
New Recommendations Based Public Feedback:

- **A regional rider feedback platform** as a response to public input that riders should be a part of shaping their system
- **On-board safety for drivers and passengers**
- **Bus cleanliness and comfort**
- **Customer service**

Other Changes:

- **Four key recommendations** from six in the draft strategy still incorporated the elements supported by the City including:
  - Creating an excellent customer experience
  - Providing frequent and convenient bus service
  - Prioritizing bus on the region's roadways

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



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

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 Metro 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

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**

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

F 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

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

H Establish a capital program at Metro that **supports accelerated implementation of bus priority projects** including BRT

I 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**

3 Create an excellent customer experience to retain and increase ridership

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

- J Ensure that accurate, real-time service information for all providers is available in one place
- K Make bus service easy to understand with legible maps and customer-friendly route names across providers
- L Expand marketing efforts to enhance visibility of bus options and benefits

Make paying bus fares easier

- M Provide free transfers between bus and rail
- N Provide reduced fare options for low-income riders
- O Create a mobile solution to plan and pay for trips in one place
- P Develop new regional passes that work across all providers, and make bus fares clear and understandable
- Q 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

Make it safer and more pleasant to ride the bus

- (R) Make bus stops and shelters safe, comfortable, accessible, and technology-enabled
- (S) Advance technology and programs that improve the safety of everyone on board by partnering with riders, bus operators, and unions
- (T) Empower front-line staff to provide exceptional customer service
- (U) Ensure that all buses meet the highest standards of comfort and cleanliness

Pursue innovation and bus improvement

- (V) Advance new vehicle technologies to improve bus' environmental footprint and efficiency
- (W) 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
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- Reduced **environmental impact** of transportation

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

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

Purpose is to provide:

- Accountability
- Visibility
- High-Level Collaboration
- Regional Solutions to Regional Problems

Y 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

Z **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:

- The public will experience 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

Examples of Activities Underway in the Region

Flexible service pilot in Montgomery County

BRT in Montgomery County and Northern Virginia

Joint storage/maintenance facilities between WMATA and Montgomery County

Electric buses in DC Circulator and RideOn Fleet

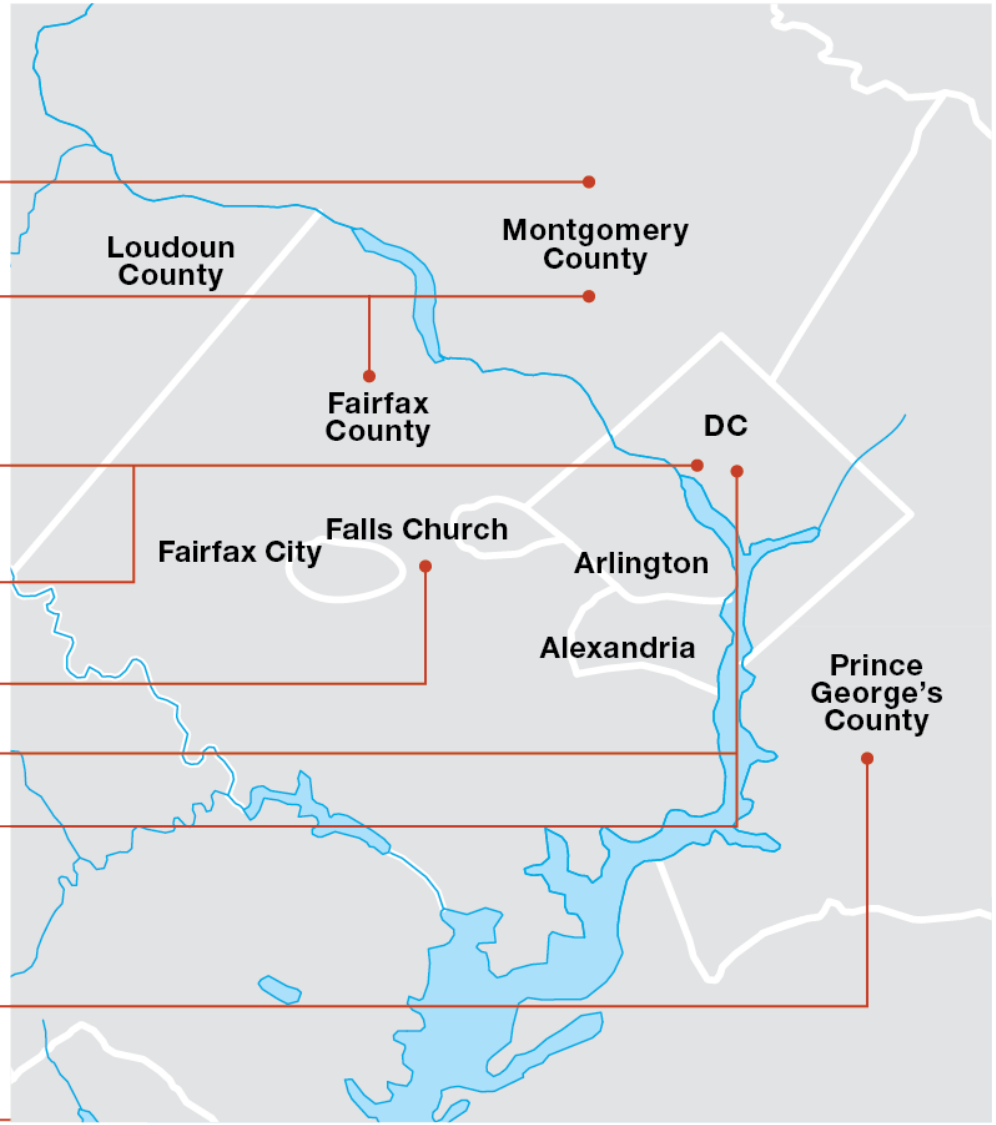
AV shuttle pilot in Fairfax County

Dedicated bus lanes in DC

Microtransit service in DC

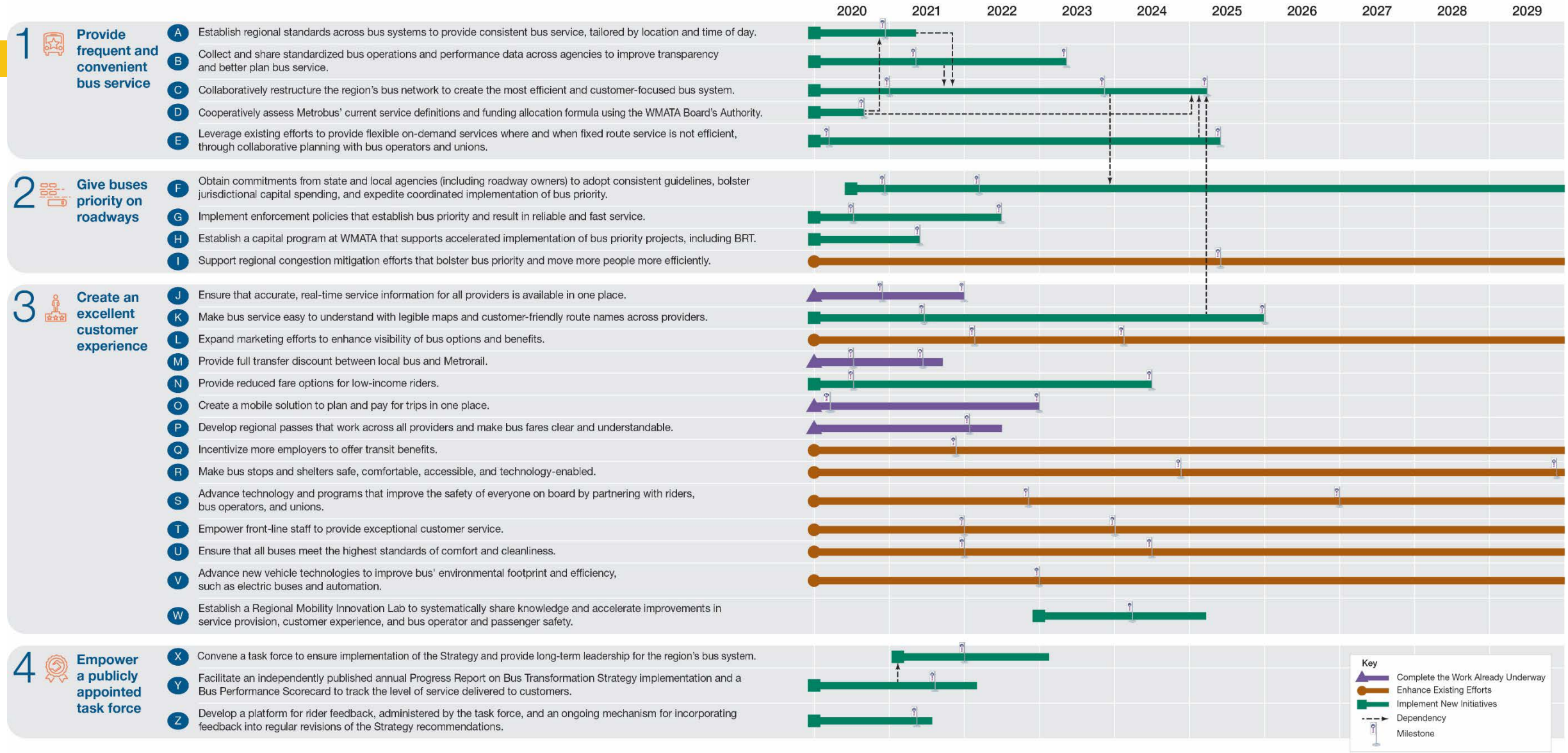
Exploring opportunities for joint storage/maintenance facilities and connected traffic signals in Prince George's County

Transit signal priority across the region



Progress to date on all Strategy recommendations by agencies in the region is provided at www.bustransformationproject.com

Plan Of Action



Action Plan – Key Outcomes of Implementing the Bus Transformation Strategy

Customers will have…

- …a more seamless experience using the region's transit system
- …bus service that better matches their needs and demands
- …faster and more reliable trips
- …less expensive trips, especially low-income passengers
- …accurate, easy-to-use, accessible information that makes it easy to use the region's transit system
- …safer and more comfortable experience when riding and waiting for the bus
- …a voice in shaping the Bus Transformation Strategy as it evolves

The region's transit system will see…

- …increased ridership
- …higher operating cost efficiency
- …improved customer satisfaction
- …less congestion on the region's roads
- …reduced environmental impact of transportation
- …better coordination in regional decision making

Next Steps to Transform the Bus

WMATA Safety and Operations Committee	12/12/2019
TPB Tech Committee	12/6/2019
TPB	12/18/2019
City of Alexandria Transportation Commission	1/15/2020
WMATA Board	1/16/2020
NVTC MAC	1/21/2020
City of Falls Church City Council	1/27/2020
City of Fairfax City Council	2/4/2020
Prince George's County Council	2/6/2020
Montgomery County Transportation and Environment Committee	2/6/2020
Arlington County Transportation Commission	2/6/2020
NVTC	3/5/2020
Fairfax County Board Transportation Committee	TBD
District of Columbia City Council	TBD
Loudoun County Board	TBD
WSTC Board	TBD

- **Present Strategy and seek endorsements** from local and regional councils/boards on Strategy
- **Empower Metro, bus providers, jurisdictions** to:
  - Lead on actions within their control
  - Partner to implement regional actions
- Recognize current financial realities, while showing progress of a bus system that is a **fast, frequent, reliable, affordable system that feels unified**

The Strategy and Action Plan are available at bustransformationproject.com

Leadership in Transforming the Bus

Actions where the City can **Lead**:

- Implement bus priority projects and enforcement
- Implement free transfers between Metrorail and DASH
- Implement low income fare products for Alexandria residents
- Test and evaluate zero emissions buses for integration into the DASH fleet
- Ensure that accurate, real-time information is available for DASH services
- Continue to improve bus stops and shelters

Actions where the City can Partner with others in the Region:

- Study the restructuring of the Metrobus network to create an efficient and customer-focused network
- Establish service standards
- Collect and share operations and performance data

Appendix - Bus Provider and Agency Progress to Date on Recommendations

1 Provide frequent and convenient bus service

Survey Findings: Progress to Date

		VA	DC	MD	Metro
A	**Establish regional standards**	WMATA developed service guidelines (2015) with the region, but not Board adopted. Other agencies have standards and/or performance metrics	✓	✓	✓	✓
B	**Collect and share standardized bus operations and performance data**	AVL and APCs on most buses in region; Level and sophistication of data cleaning and analysis varies	✓	✓	✓	✓
C	**Collaboratively restructure the region's bus network**	Nothing has been done at a full regional level. VA agencies have and will continue to review entire network (by jurisdiction) through required TDP and TSP process. DC local bus study completed in 2014; Circulator TDP updated in 2017. Prince George's Transit Vision Plan	✓	✓	✓	
D	**Cooperatively assess Metrobus' current service definitions and funding allocation**	Progress made through first part of Bus Transformation Project	*No survey question*			
E	**Leverage existing efforts by transit providers to operate flexible on-demand services**	Montgomery County and DDOT have pilot programs. Other jurisdictions have studied it or are currently studying it. Prince George's has limited call-a-ride services open to all	✓	✓	✓	✓

Note: Checkmarks indicate some level of progress, not necessarily completion. Progress-to-date information is current as of October 2019. Refer to the full Action Plan for more details.

2 Give buses priority on roadways

Survey Findings: Progress to Date

		VA	DC	MD	Metro
F	**Obtain commitments from state and local agencies (including roadway owners) to expedite bus priority**	No commitments exist to expedite bus priority measures. Implementation decisions implemented on a case by case basis. 2015 Metrobus service standards included priority. DDOT has made H&I Street bus lanes permanent, Arlington/Alexandria have Metroway, Fairfax Co and Montgomery working on several corridors				
G	**Implement enforcement policies that establish bus priority**	Traffic Incident Management Enhancement Taskforce (TIME) as part of TPB/COG. MCDOT, DDOT, VDOT, all expressed support for this. Plus "general agreement that it's good to pursue." TPB Bus Lane Enforcement Study from 2017. Varying implementations of automated enforcement allowed in different jurisdictions	✓	✓	✓	
H	**Establish a capital program at WMATA that supports accelerated implementation**	No progress to date	*No survey question*			
I	**Support regional congestion mitigation efforts that bolster bus priority**	Some work being done, e.g. DDOT study in FY20 budget. VDOT has congestion pricing on Express Lanes. MD is considering managed lanes	✓	✓	✓	

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3 Create an excellent customer experience

Equip riders with high-quality, accurate, and easily accessible information

J: Real-time service information for all providers available in one place

K: Legible maps and customer-friendly route names across providers

L: Expand marketing efforts to enhance visibility of bus

Make paying bus fares easier.

M: Provide full transfer discount between bus and rail

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

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

Q: Incentivize more employers to offer transit benefits

Survey Findings: Progress to Date

	VA	DC	MD	Metro
All agencies report progress but not completely implemented at this time.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Other than the WMATA-published map, there are no system-wide maps. Have not started route renumbering	*No survey question*			
Bus marketing is thus far piecemeal on individual services - MD 355 Ride On 101, DC Circulator, etc.	✓	✓	✓	
WMATA proposed as part of FY21 operating budget				✓
Various subsidy programs in multiple jurisdictions, and some free fares (e.g., CUE). DC/WMATA planning pilot	✓	✓		
WMATA is working on a mobile payment solution				✓
WMATA has added Metrobus to its monthly unlimited rail pass. Most bus operators in the region already accept the WMATA Weekly Unlimited Bus Pass	✓	✓	✓	✓
Many jurisdictions already have programs: Arlington, Fairfax, Alexandria, DC, and parts of Montgomery	✓	✓	✓	✓

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Survey Findings: Progress to Date

	VA	DC	MD	Metro
VDOT, WMATA, Fairfax County already have guidelines. City of Fairfax is in the process of developing. Alexandria and Prince George's use WMATA's standards	✓	✓	✓	✓
All agencies have passenger and driver safety features, and are planning for improvements	✓	✓	✓	✓
All providers include customer service in operator training efforts, although some are provided by the contractor. Alexandria and FCDOT have incentive programs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Operators have individual standards	*No survey question*			
Five agencies currently doing or moving toward electric bus procurement (WMATA, Circulator, Ride On, DASH, The Bus) with expected implementation around 2021. VDOT and DRPT are also moving forward with EV buses. AV shuttles being tested in VA	✓	✓	✓	✓
TPB Regional Public Transportation Subcommittee and WMATA JCC are two existing forums for ad-hoc information sharing	*No survey question*			

Note: Checkmarks indicate some level of progress, not necessarily completion. Progress-to-date information is current as of October 2019. Refer to the full Action Plan for more details.

4 Empower a publicly appointed Task Force to transform bus

Survey Findings: Progress to Date

		VA	DC	MD	Metro
X	**Convene a Task Force to oversee implementation of the Strategy and provide long-term leadership for the regional bus system with membership**	No agencies have committed to date; revisit the structure and timing of this recommendation		*No survey question*	
Y	**Annual progress report on Bus Transformation Strategy implementation and a bus performance scorecard**	Bus performance scorecard - some start from CSG report (just Metrobus in DC). Performance metrics are published by DASH, Metrobus, City of Fairfax, Fairfax County, MCDOT. DRPT and NVTC collect and publish performance metrics for all agencies	✓		✓	✓
Z	**Develop a platform for rider feedback, administered by the Task Force, and an ongoing mechanism for incorporating feedback**	RACs exists at WMATA and Prince George's County. DASH is forming advisory committees. Other agencies have ways for riders to provide feedback on service	✓	✓	✓	✓

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